

INFORMATION

What Is the California Medical Assistants' Association?

DOCTORS, are you satisfied with your office medical assistant?

Is she taking advantage of all opportunities to improve her knowledge and education, the better to serve the medical profession and the public?

Is she a good public relations representative for the medical profession?

Does she belong to a medical assistants' organization?

Are you aware that such an organization exists?

There is such an organization. In California it is endorsed by the California Medical Association, and its name is California Medical Assistants' Association of California. It began in 1952 when medical assistants in Northern California joined to form the California Medical Assistants Society. In 1953 a similar group was started in the southern part of the state, and soon afterward correspondence between the two groups began. Representatives from both sections attended a meeting in Kansas City in 1955 to organize a national association. The two California groups merged in 1956 and the new statewide organization was incorporated on March 17, 1957. Since then many new component chapters have come into the state organization; at present 35 county organizations with a total of over 1,900 members are represented.

The organization has the full support and approval of the California Medical Association and the American Medical Association. Patterned after medical societies, it is composed of county chapters which make up the state organization, which in turn is a component of a national association.

The American Association of Medical Assistants was endorsed by the American Medical Association at its 1956 meeting in Seattle. At present there are 20 affiliated state units and over 6,500 members. California led in number of members in 1958 with 1,892. There are ten physician advisors, one appointed by the A.M.A. from its Board of Trustees. Dr. Steward H. Smith of San Diego is the advisor from California.

The first annual convention, following two organizational meetings in the Midwest, was held in San Francisco in October, 1957. At the 1958 convention held in Chicago, registration totaled 472. The A.M.A. sponsored a tour of its headquarters and a program for those who attended. The association now has an office at 510 Dearborn Street in

Chicago, just across the street from A.M.A. headquarters. An executive secretary is to be employed this year. The 1959 convention will be held October 16-18 in Philadelphia.

Information to acquaint physicians with the assistants' association was provided in a brochure, "WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY of the California Medical Assistants' Association," that was distributed at an annual meeting of the California Medical Association. Excerpts from it follow:

WHO . . .

We are the women who assist the doctors of California. We are the nurses, receptionists, secretaries, bookkeepers and technicians. We handle the business and technical details of the doctors' offices, thereby leaving the physician free to practice medicine; to serve his patients with the skill, care and judgment which he has acquired. The Medical Assistants' respect for the Profession makes them strive for better public relations; to be ethical in all dealings with patients and in their participation in the civic affairs of the community.

WHAT . . .

In their efforts to elevate the standards of procedure in doctors' offices and clinics they have joined forces with other county organizations to form a State Association. *It is not, and shall never become, a trade union or collective bargaining agency.* Its purpose is a sincere and cooperative interchange of knowledge and ideas on how to improve public relations in medical endeavors.

WHEN . . .

The C.M.A.A. began to take effect in 1952, and after a merger of north and south groups, it became incorporated on March 17, 1957.

WHERE . . .

Each member is a member of her own local county organization which is endorsed by its own county medical society. The California Medical Association approves of a statewide organization and provides an advisory committee as do the local county societies.

WHY . . .

The purposes of this association are:

To bring members into a closer relationship, thereby promoting mutual understanding and a spirit of cooperation between the members;

To promote the interests of the members and to secure better public relations;

To provide a means whereby all Medical Secretaries and Assistants may become associated together and work toward the common good of the medical profession;

To enlarge the opportunities of the members through education, scientific and business training, and the participation in vocational activities;

In general, to promote the highest standards of endeavor among Medical Assistants.

Already educational programs have been set up by C.M.A.A. In 1958 a series of five educational symposia were held at various widely separated places in the state so that all members would have an opportunity to attend at least one. These were held on Sundays (a medical assistant's only sure day off) in the months of September and October, in the following cities: Chico, Burbank, Berkeley, San Diego, and Bakersfield. They were very well received. A total of about 800 medical assistants attended. A registration fee of one dollar for each session was charged. Meetings were held in hospital auditoriums, colleges or hotels, members paying for their own luncheons. Doctors and other speakers gave unselfishly of their time to instruct the medical assistants. The symposia will be repeated in 1959, and all medical assistants, whether members or not, are urged to attend. Details will be forthcoming.

Most local chapters have educational programs at their monthly meetings. Physician speakers are most popular; medical films are shown; and office procedures are explained. Other programs feature public health, Community Chest organizations, rehabilitation, telephone etiquette, good grooming, and occasional dinner meetings. In addition to educational speakers at regular meetings, most chapters have weekly educational workshops or medical lectures. In many of the large cities medical assistant courses are sponsored by adult education boards of the public school systems. Some state colleges and junior colleges have regular courses suitable for medical assistants, a few being taught by C.M.A.A. members.

Each chapter has one or more philanthropic projects. One chapter supplied the furnishings for a hospital room at a cost of about \$1,500. Others send underprivileged children to summer camps or sponsor needy families, and some are offering scholarships for future medical secretaries and student nurses. Methods of fund raising vary from rummage sales to fashion shows and dinners.

On several political issues of mutual interest, the Assistants' Association has recorded its support or its opposition along with that of organized medicine. A legislative committee, with a chairman in Sacramento, works with the Public Health League of California and keeps members of C.M.A.A. informed of proposed legislation of interest to the medical profession.

In another area of influence, when urged to do

so by the California Medical Association, members of the Assistants' Association called their employers' attention to the importance of filling out and returning the Relative Value Study questionnaire.

New officers of the C.M.A.A., who took office at the annual convention in Pasadena, April 18, are: President, Mrs. Anne Reece, Porterville; president-elect, Mrs. Lauretta Cole, Santa Barbara; first vice-president, Mrs. Helen Anderson, Encinitas; second vice-president, Mrs. Helen McDonald, Oakland; treasurer, Mrs. Maryanne Neill, San Francisco; recording secretary, Miss Nina Rudolph, San Francisco, and corresponding secretary, Miss Emmy Kibler, Tulare County.

The Advisory Board for Internal Affairs is composed of three physicians and two C.M.A.A. members: Steward H. Smith, M.D., San Diego; Vincent M. Dungan, M.D., Visalia; Leon O. Desimone, M.D., Los Angeles; Mrs. Mary Kinn, Orange County, and Mrs. Elisabeth Massey, San Diego.

April has been designated the month for a C.M.A.A. membership drive. Many county medical societies are dedicating their April bulletins to medical assistants, and each medical assistant society is dedicating its own bulletin and planning special programs for prospective members. Doctors are invited to attend local and state meetings to learn more about the organization, and above all are urged to send their medical assistants. For any additional information you may contact Mrs. Kathryn Allen, membership chairman, 14407 Califa, Van Nuys, or, any of the above listed officers.

As to what the California Medical Assistants' Association has to offer its members:

1. Membership in local, state, and national organizations. Association with people in their own field. Regular monthly meetings and social gatherings within the local organization. Annual state and national conventions.

2. Information. Most local chapters have bulletins published monthly. State and national bulletins are published quarterly.

3. Education on local, state and national levels, at little or no expense to members.

4. Insurance. Through the national organization a most comprehensive hospital, surgical, and salary replacement insurance program is offered, which cannot be equalled elsewhere.

5. A better future in the member's own field through the knowledge gained through association and educational programs. Eventual certification of medical assistants is planned.

M.D. QUOTES ABOUT MEDICAL ASSISTANTS

"The American Medical Association has faith in you and it will continue to assist you in developing good educational programs and in winning wider

acceptance among the medical profession. . . . The American Medical Association is your ally in our efforts to improve health and fight disease. There never was a more worthwhile campaign. Best wishes to you.”—DR. F. J. L. BLASINGAME, *Vice-President and General Manager*, American Medical Association.

“The American Association of Medical Assistants is doing a job that would do justice to an organization ten times its size.”—DR. MORRIS FISHBEIN.

“The American Association of Medical Assistants has accomplished much, but there is a long road ahead—with a brilliant future. You have won the confidence of the American Physician. . . . Because of A.A.M.A., what has been a common occupation is developing into an uncommon profession.”—DR. FRED STERNAGEL, *A.A.M.A. Advisor*, Iowa.

“Your many outstanding contributions to the progress of medical treatment and research merit the gratitude of all Californians.”—GOODWIN J. KNIGHT, *former Governor of California*, in a telegram to A.A.M.A., Annual Convention, San Francisco, 1957.

“Your code of ethics and obligation in acceptance of membership in your organization indicate that your purposes are of the highest caliber. . . . I should say, personally, that that doctor is fortunate, indeed, who has an assistant who is earnestly following your written aims.”—DR. HERMAN A. IVERSON, *Past President*, Humboldt-Del Norte County Medical Society.

“Your jobs are the most important position in the entire private practice of medicine. Few of us doctors keep in mind the importance of our medical assistants who have to keep our offices running smoothly and pleasantly until something happens to keep them from the office—that is a real disaster.”—From “The Perfect Medical Assistant,” DR. JAMES B. GRAESER, C.M.A.A. Symposium, Hotel Claremont, Berkeley, September 28, 1958.

“The doctors in Santa Clara County should consider themselves fortunate that there is here an active chapter of the American Association of Medical Assistants. Theirs is a society dedicated *not* to ways and means of getting more pay or to improving their working conditions, but to ways of improving themselves so that they can do a better job for [physicians]. They are learning better public and patient relations, more efficient ways of getting their jobs done, and ways to help [physicians] better serve their patients. We should give all the encouragement we can, not only for our aides to join this Society of Medical Assistants but to attend meetings. This encouragement should not only be in the form of persuasion or suggestions, but also financial. Pay her initiation fee, pay her yearly dues,

and also for her meals that go along with their monthly meetings. The two, three, or even four dollars a month will not mean nearly as much to you as it does to her; and, besides, inasmuch as it is for the betterment of our offices, it should be considered an office expense.”—DR. LELAND B. BLANCHARD, San Jose, California.

New Mental Hygiene Director

DR. DANIEL BLAIN, nationally known psychiatrist and administrator in the field of mental health, on March 1 took the reins as director of California's Department of Mental Hygiene following announcement of his appointment as head of the state's largest agency by Governor Edmund G. Brown.

For ten years medical director of the American Psychiatric Association, Dr. Blain left that post last year to become professor of clinical psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and to serve as director of mental health training and research for the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE). He remained active with APA as director of its program for recruitment, distribution and utilization of psychiatrists. He also serves as a consultant to the Veterans Administration. At the time of his appointment, Dr. Blain had just completed a four-month tour of 14 western states to examine their programs for WICHE in line with efforts of its Council on Mental Health Training and Research to establish interstate cooperative programs for use of training and research facilities.

Much the same type of cooperative use of California's facilities, involving public and private agencies and use of all community resources, was outlined by Dr. Blain on taking office as State Director of Mental Hygiene. He said his plans would rely heavily on prevention, research, and methods of obtaining and training more personnel in the psychiatric field.

Dr. Blain's rich background as a mental health administrator includes organization of psychiatric services in the Merchant Marine during World War II, and spearheading of the movement for reforms in veterans' psychiatric care as postwar chief of psychiatry for the Veterans Administration. He has also written numerous articles for professional publications. His choice as director, Governor Brown stated, was unanimous among an informal Governor's Advisory Committee made up of Dr. Frank Tallman, former mental hygiene director; Dr. Karl Bowman, professor emeritus of psychiatry at the University of California Medical School and former head of Langley Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute; and Superior Judge W. B. Neeley of Los Angeles.